

Hornet's Nest

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Summary: Master Chief was warned away from the room. But he never listens. And the Arbiter can't take the time to explain the reason why. Slash Arbiter/Chief

Hornet's Nest

I do not own nor profit from Halo or its characters.

-o-o-o-

"Don't go in there, Master Chief, sir." The marine stood rigidly at attention, if not slightly apologetic at denying the infamous Spartan access, "He gave specific instructions not to let anyone through. Especially you."

John's eyebrow quirked within his helmet, the look somehow conveying through the reflective gold of his visor, as he replied, "Oh really? Well, someone should try telling him this war isn't over yet, regardless of the fact that they've decided to switch to our side."

As the Spartan continued through the short hallway, the marine reluctantly placed a hand on the green-armored shoulder, "Sir, he was very adamant."

"At ease, soldier. I've faced thousands of Elites when they were our enemies. I think I could handle one if he gets a bit disgruntled." Master Chief nodded his head once the man stepped back into place, knowing the marine had only been doing as instructed. Relief seemed to seep into the soldier's features, though he still looked slightly concerned as Master Chief punched in the code and stepped into the Sanghelli's sanctuary.

Darkness greeted him as the door whined mechanically closed at his back. Within half a breath, the Chief's eyes had adjusted and made

use of what little light there was.

After a few steps, he felt the unusually thick silence draped around the room. The hairs on the back of his neck rose and he received an instinctual warning of some sort of impending danger. He resisted the urge to go on guard, realizing how precariously balanced their alliance was. He was the intruder here, but he wouldn't have come if he wasn'tâ€|

What was he exactly?

â€|worriedâ€|?

Master Chief scoffed at that, an ironic grin twisting his features as he remembered one of the first times they had met.

=o= TWO MONTHS AGO =o=

"You are the reason I have fallen from grace, Demon. You destroyed the ring. My ship. My reputation. My life. The least you owe me is your death to regain my honor." The Arbiter growled, his blue reptilian skin quaking minutely in his sudden anger.

"Was that your ship? Funny. They all look the same to me." Master Chief quipped dryly, circling the other as the Elite did, each looking for a weak spot.

All around them, the forest burned. Upturned vehicles as charred as the black spots of vegetation they lay next to. The outpost had been a breeze for the Chief. Snipers were the first to go, then the big guns, then grunts last. It all would've been over and done with if the Arbiter hadn't shown up out of the blue.

"Came a little late to save your little friends, didn't you?" The Chief asked, gesturing towards the freshly made corpses all around them.

The Arbiter's thin thread of control snapped at the last provocation, and he snarled unintelligibly before he charged. Too angry to see reason.

It should've been an easy victory. But it soon became apparent that both warriors were too evenly matched. Both driven by a cause they fully believed in.

Bloodied and bruised, they both stepped back for a breather, chests heaving as they eyed each other with new dawning respect.

The forest was burning down around them, however, and made its presence known as a large trunk crashed between the two, driving them further apart.

"It's too bad we couldn't be on the same side, Demon." The Arbiter admitted begrudgingly, knowing as well as the Chief that this particular battle was over, as the burning shrubbery made clear, "You would have been a welcome addition to my old task force."

"We don't perform genocide to entire races because of their religious beliefs. Not anymore and never again." Master Chief growled.

"As do you, I must follow the decree of my superiors. It is expected of us all." The Sanghelli stated.

"Take a real good look at that mark of yours." The Chief growled, finger thrusting towards the chestplate that covered it. The surprised look on the Sanghelli's face informed John that the Arbiter truly did not know the extensive intel the humans, and Master Chief, had on his kind.

"Take a good long look, and tell me again, later, if they have the good of your people in mind." Master Chief finished, before turning around and leaping through the entrapping flames.

The Arbiter watched him go, mandibles a little slack in disbelief. How could the words of an enemy echo so closely to his own doubts?

=o= FIVE WEEKS AGO =o=

"Why should I work with the likes of you, Demon?" The Arbiter hissed, shrugging off the hand that the Chief had placed on his arm.

John shot a glare right back at the warrior beside him, "I'm not exactly overjoyed about the situation either, but does it look like Gravemind has given us a choice?"

"Don't preach to me of choices, Demon." The Sanghelli spat, "There were a vast number of times I could've killed you where you stood!"

It was true. One time John's rifle had jammed and the Sanghelli was right there. They had both stared at each other, before the battle rose and consumed them once more. The Arbiter had shot at him then, but the Chief was already gone.

Another time the Spartan had fallen from at least four stories, a near hit of a Hunter's cannon blast forcing him off the ledge. He had landed hard. Landed wrong.

His arm had been dislocated, his Spartan suit already attempting to compensate for the weakness. Master Chief had laid there, in the snow, a second too long.

The Arbiter had appeared around the corner, surprise stilling his feet. Then he was moving.

With clenched teeth, John had struggled to his feet, trying to shake the dizziness enshrouding his mind. But it was too late, the Sanghelli was too close, and the Chief's weapon too far away. Still he rose, ready to meet death on his feet.

When John had finally staggered up, the Arbiter was waiting. To the Chief's extreme confusion, however, the Sanghelli was just staring at him, head cocked.

Warily, John stared back. He was unarmed, wounded. The Arbiter had every advantage to kill him. But he didn't.

And those two weren't the only times.

Remembering each one as clear as day, Master Chief cocked his head a little to the side, frowning. It just didn't add up.

"Why didn't youâ€¦?" The question trailed off. If it had been said with anger, ferocity, or any emotion attached to rage, the Arbiter would have easily snapped back some sharp retort. But the way the Demon asked had been steeped in curiosity. It had been spoken barely above a whisper, as though the human had almost been afraid to hear the answer.

Unsure himself, the Arbiter blinked. He was immensely surprised the Demon had been able to catch him soâ€¦ off guard.

The Arbiter moved.

John reflexively raised his own gun as the Elite brought his carbine to his sights. When it fired, the Chief barely heard the slump of a jackal's body behind him before he released his half-pulled trigger finger.

The Arbiter leveled him with a cold stare, "Don't ask such foolish questions."

=o= ONE WEEK AGO =o=

He had betrayed them!

Of course, since this had happened before, it shouldn't have been a surprise. But both of them had hopedâ€¦

But no, they had just traded one villain for another.

The building was crumbling around them, the tentacles of the Flood leader whipping around erratically. The roar of the Pelican's thrusters surged hope through Master Chief's heart as he remembered once more why Sergeant Johnson had survived this long into the war.

There was no time. The Pelican was taking off!

Heaving himself upwards, Master Chief felt his hand clamp securely onto the open hatch of the UNSC vehicle before gravity tugged at him.

It seemed almost like second nature for his next thoughts to be of the Elite.

"Arbiter!" He roared out, his head whipping behind him as he searched for the other warrior.

The Sanghelli jerked his head upwards, mandibles gaping slightly as he saw his only escape about to take off. He leaped forwards, trying to grab on as well, but he missed the hatch.

The Sanghelli warrior watched in disbelief as he started his downward fall. To have gone so far only to fall short. Disappointment filled him. He waited for impact with the ground.

Instead, he found a firm grip clasped on his hand as the Demon successfully caught him. Even when Gravemind struck the ship, aiming

at them, Master Chief's risked losing his own grip to ensure his hold on the Arbiter was secure. And when they had flown a relatively safe distance away, it was John who dragged both their exhausted bodies inside the interior of the human space craft.

They both just lay their on their backs, chests heaving to fill their lungs with air, as the hatch finally closed behind them.

The Arbiter turned to silently inspect the Spartan beside him.

Expecting some scathing remark or other, the Chief just chose to ignore him, focusing on nothing in particular. Which is why the next statement took him so off guard.

"You have my thanks, Demon."

Master Chief turned to look at the Sanghelli, more than simple surprise adorning his features. That had been the first time the Arbiter had said something to him without a tint of sarcasm, or malice to his voice.

He didn't realize he was staring until one of the Elite's brows quirked upwards.

Shaking his head, Master Chief cleared his throat before replying, "Uh, no problem, Arbiter."

=o= PRESENT =o=

Lost in his reminiscing, Master Chief didn't catch the movement until it was too late.

His breath was forced out of him as he was slammed against a wall, the lean and strong body of an Elite pressing against him, a four fingered fist gripping one of his shoulders.

"You shouldn't have come in hereâ€|" The Sanghelli growled dangerously.

"Yeah, I kind of got that from the marine standing guard duty just outside. What's all this about? You're losing your focus, and I need to know why."

"Losing my-? Wait, you came here because I seem distracted?" The Arbiter's brows creased as he frowned.

"It would be fine, except it's happened during battle. The kind of life we lead doesn't give us the luxury of being distracted for one moment."

"The kind of life we lead doesn't give us much luxuries at allâ€|" The Sanghelli muttered bitterly.

Master Chief frowned.

Then he felt a full shiver through the Elite's body, right before the Arbiter's eyes snapped to John's as he hissed, "You need to get out of here. NOW."

The Spartan found himself stumbling as he was shoved towards the door. He caught himself before he could fall flat on his face. Whipping around angrily, he growled, "What the hell is your prob-"

But then the Elite was on him again, attempting to wrestle the Chief down to the ground. Years of intense training and combat situations kicked in, and John twisted his stance just enough to use the Arbiter's own force to send him flying in the other direction. He watched warily as the Elite caught himself on the wall, his back rising and falling rapidly to match his increased breaths. It seemed almost as though the Sanghelli was resisting every urge to even move.

"Get a hold of yourself, Arbiter." John growled, every fiber of his being switched on, just waiting for the next attack.

"Iâ€¦ can only manage to warn youâ€¦ one last time Demonâ€¦" The Arbiter stated shakily, his voice attempting calm as a wave of alarm washed through, "RUN."

The fear and urgency in the Sanghelli's voice triggered the Spartan's last ditch flight reflex. His feet were moving before he even realized he was running towards the door. Going into the Sanghelli's sanctuary may have just been the biggest mistake of his life.

Still unsure what was even going on, John blocked it all out as he sprinted towards the exit.

He had thought he was home free, only a few steps to the door, when the Arbiter skidded in front of him out of nowhere.

"Not fast enough, Demon." The Elite said darkly, his nervousness from moments before completely gone. He was very collected, calm, and focused.

And all his attention was on the Spartan.

The Elite took a step forward. John mirrored it, taking a step back. The Sanghelli took another step, and the Spartan did the same. The Chief was getting the distinct feeling that distance was a precious commodity, and he wasn't about to give it up without a fight.

"What do you want, Arbiter?" Master Chief questioned, keeping the doubt from his voice. There was only one exit in the entire room, and the only way to get to it was through the Elite.

And the Chief had the feeling that the Sanghelli was very aware of this fact.

The Elite paused, his mandibles twisting into a smirk, "I would think it obvious, Demon."

"Then please, enlighten me." The Chief said stiffly.

The Arbiter answered by lunging forward. The Spartan blocked, dodging a punch as he swung a blow of his own. The Elite pressed the attack, forcing the Chief backwards and farther away from the door. Noticing this, the Spartan attempted to sidestep the Sanghelli's blows, trying to change the direction. But this just made the Arbiter attack

fiercer, keeping the angle of their steps the same.

Master Chief's nerves started to get to him as second after second past and their fighting continued its stalemate, neither side winning nor losing. Then again, perhaps the growing distance from the Chief's destination made Arbiter king of the hill.

"This is it, then?" The Spartan demanded, continuing parrying the Sanghelli's blows. He dodged underneath one powerful strike, dancing off to the side as he growled, "All the teaming up, the fighting side by side, what was that? A phase? A trick? Or maybe nothing at all?"

He attempted, once again, to launch past the Elite. In retrospect, it seemed futile. The Sanghelli were faster than humans. Stronger too. Not to mention he was in the Arbiter's home turf. It was something he should have paid more attention to.

His ankle hit the raised floor of the next room, his quick reflexes immediately attempting to compensate for his balance. But the Sanghelli had been watching too closely, driving him too intensely, and waiting for this exact moment. With a guttural sound, the Arbiter threw his own muscled body against the Spartan, leaving him no other option but to crash hard onto his back. Even with the suit and the short fall, the force from the Sanghelli and his own added mass made the breath expel from the Chief's chest in one hard gush.

The Spartan's head connected harshly with the metal-meshed floor, his vision doubling as he was momentarily stunned. He was just thinking of redesigning the architecture of the ship, when he found large hands wrapped around his head. Still slightly out of it, he only managed a weak shake as he tried to shrug off the Arbiter's hold. Before he knew it, his suit depressurized with a hiss and his helmet was tugged off his head.

"Theâ€| hellâ€|?" John growled, ice blue eyes blinking against unfiltered light, attempting to get himself together.

He flinched when he found the Arbiter's large hand at his face, expecting a fist, a smack, anything that involved pain in large doses. Maybe even some strangling. But when all the Sanghelli did was cup the side of his face silently, John found it all but impossible not to blink his eyes and stare up at the warrior.

He found the Sanghelli smirking, his devious hands already scraping across his chest plate armor, searching for the catch. A spike of fear lanced through the Chief, as he started to realize the direction this new game was heading.

End
file.